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Recovery News

A DISASTER PET PLAN THAT WORKED FOR SAN DIEGO PETS AND PEOPLE STAYING TOGETHER

Note to editor: During the California wildfires new and innovative disaster pet plans were set into motion. This story highlights one such plan.

PASADENA, Calif. — Whether it's puppies, parakeets or pythons, Californians love their pets and leaving them behind when disaster strikes is not an option. San Diego had a disaster pet plan for the California wildfires, and it worked.

To qualify for grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, under the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act signed by President Bush in October 2006, state and local emergency preparedness officials must include an emergency plan for pets and service animals. San Diego County had a comprehensive disaster plan in place and was prepared. They saw to it that pets and people stayed together during the wildfire crisis.

The County of San Diego Department of Animal Services was at the helm and worked in unison with the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA, and the American Red Cross (ARC).

Adjacent to the Mira Mesa High School and Qualcomm Stadium ARC shelters, common areas and green space served as kennel space. San Diego Humane Society volunteers were on hand to help at Mira Mesa High School, and volunteers from Noah's Wish were at Qualcomm Stadium to help those coming to the shelters with their small pets. They busily tagged the pets and documented information on the owners. They also supplied larger pet crates, food and water.

"Many pet owners camped out and took personal care of their animals, and owners were able to go into the ARC shelters for rest and nourishment themselves," said Lt. Daniel DeSousa of the San Diego County Department of Animal Services. "It was a 'win-win' situation for both the pets and their owners."

The Humane Society also supplied the "MUTT mobile," (Mobile Universal Transport and Treatment), an RV stocked with medical supplies and an onboard veterinarian. "This was a great source of comfort to those who came to the shelters with older pets," said Simran Noon, spokesperson for the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA.

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PETS AND PEOPLE STAYING TOGETHER**

San Diego proved that keeping pets and people together in the face of disaster can be done, and because of this caring and coordinated effort, many fire victims were spared the added trauma of being separated from their pets.

***Note to editor: This picture, in hi-res color, is available upon request
by calling the FEMA newsdesk at 626-431-3178***

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 1-800-462-7585.

Temporary housing assistance from FEMA does not require that an applicant file for an SBA loan. However, an applicant must complete an SBA loan application to be eligible for additional assistance under the part of the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses. There are other ONA grants such as public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses that do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan to be eligible. FEMA will process applications for housing assistance regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an SBA loan, and eligibility determinations for applicants requesting FEMA's temporary housing assistance will not be held up because the applicant has or has not filled out an SBA application.



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